

Nathan Ley—Plano, Texas—Plano Senior High School

Congratulations are in order for these 13 appointees. God bless you, God bless America, and I salute you.

THE ISRAELI BLOCKADE AND THE FLOTILLA

SPEECH OF

HON. SHELLEY BERKLEY

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 9, 2010

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in solidarity with the State of Israel and all peace-loving nations who seek to defend their citizens and put an end to terrorism. Unfortunately, we live in an age when those simple goals are under threat and we face enemies who will use any means at their disposal to indiscriminately kill men, women and children who stand in their way.

As the world knows, on May 31, the Israeli navy stopped a flotilla of six ships headed toward the Gaza Strip. These ships were flying under Turkish flags and claimed to be carrying tons of humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza. However, the real goal of these so-called "peace activists" was—in their own words—to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza and allow Hamas to import whatever they want to Gaza, including weapons. But these activists should remember that Hamas can end the blockade at any moment by recognizing Israel's right to exist, ending the violence and releasing Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who has been held by Hamas without access to the Red Cross for four years.

When the Israeli navy attempted to commandeer the boats and bring them to Israeli ports for inspection, most of the passengers aboard the boats cooperated and used only non-violent, passive resistance to impede the Israeli efforts. However, one of the boats was filled with members of an Islamist group with connections to Hamas and Hezbollah, called IHH (Insani Yardim Vakfi). These "peace activists" immediately attacked the Israeli soldiers with knives, metal bars, wrenches, clubs and rocks. The soldiers' lives were clearly at risk and they fired back to quell the fighting, killing nine.

It is important to point out that these IHH members were not serving a humanitarian mission. If that were the case, they would have cooperated with the Israelis and the Egyptians in order to expedite the arrival of their cargo. Prior to the incident, Israel offered to have the aid delivered to an Israeli port for inspection and delivery to Gaza. There was even a similar Egyptian offer, but the activists rejected both of those offers. As the organizers themselves said, this operation was about more than just delivering aid, but rather about ending the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

I also reject the entire premise that there is any need for humanitarian supplies in Gaza. In 2009, more than 738,000 tons of food and supplies entered Gaza. The total amount of aid transferred from Israel to Gaza in 2009 increased by 180 percent, compared to the amount transferred in 2008. From January 1, 2010 through May 8, 2010, 230,690 tons of humanitarian aid was transferred from Israel into Gaza through the Israel-Gaza goods

crossings. This included medical supplies, milk powder and baby food, meat, chicken, fish, grains, legumes, oil, flour, salt, sugar, fresh vegetables and dairy products as well as animal feed, hygiene products and clothes. That does not sound like a humanitarian crisis to me.

Hamas and its allies are simply using Israel's legal blockade of Gaza as a propaganda tool to undermine international support for the State of Israel. But if it weren't for this blockade, Hamas could import unlimited amounts of weaponry and rockets, which they would turn against Israeli civilians, as they have done in the past. If the naval blockade were broken, as the activists seek, every man, woman and child in Israel would be at risk from Iranian and Syrian missiles.

Unfortunately, efforts are now underway to unfairly paint Israel as the aggressor in this incident, when they were simply acting to defend their citizens. Calls are mounting for an international investigation like the biased and deeply-flawed Goldstone Report, which accused Israel of war crimes in its self-defensive Operation Cast Lead. I join Israel in rejecting these calls. Israel, a strong democracy and America's close ally, is perfectly capable of conducting a fair, credible investigation that meets international standards.

I find it even more galling that such calls are now being made, given the silence following North Korea's horrific attack on a South Korean ship that killed 46 sailors. It is time the world focused on such real threats to peace, while recognizing Israel's right to defend its civilian population against persistent terrorist threats.

I am also deeply disturbed by Turkey's recent actions and statements regarding Israel and the Palestinians. Their irresponsible support for this so-called "aid" flotilla actually sought to bolster the Hamas terrorists in Gaza who have pledged to destroy Israel at any cost. By seeking an end to the blockade, Turkey is trying to legitimize a terrorist group that targets civilians and harms any chance for peace. As I've said, Turkey—and the world—should remember that Hamas can end the blockade at any moment by recognizing Israel's right to exist, ending the violence and releasing Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who has been held by Hamas without access to the Red Cross for 4 years.

Meanwhile, Turkey's actions have undermined the moderate Palestinians who have been building institutions, ending corruption and cracking down on violent extremists. If there is a chance for peace in the region, it does not come from the extremist elements Turkey is supporting.

And Turkey is hardly in a position to criticize Israel. The world community should remember that Turkey has been illegally occupying the northern part of Cyprus—a sovereign nation—for over three decades, despite international calls to remove its troops. They have also steadfastly refused to recognize the Armenian Genocide and have systematically denied basic religious rights to the Greek Orthodox Patriarch in Istanbul. With their recent actions, Turkey is once again showing its true colors, as a supporter of terrorists, and not a champion of peacemaking.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply disturbed by the recent events and fear that the world is once again blaming the victim. Israel must be allowed to defend itself—for its own sake, for

ours, and for the sake of all people around the world who are under threat of terror. We must not be duped into believing that these Hamas-sympathizers are somehow acting in the name of peace. Nothing could be further from the truth. We must take a united stand for democracy, for the rule of law, and for peace.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BILL POSEY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 14, 2010

Mr. POSEY. Madam Speaker, on rollcall 354 my vote in support of S. 3474—To amend the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 to authorize advances from Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund—was not recorded by the House voting system. I fully supported this bill and should have been recorded as "yea."

IN RECOGNITION OF EDWARD GEFFNER, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF PROJECT RENEWAL, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 14, 2010

Mrs. MALONEY. Madam Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the achievements of Mr. Edward Geffner on the occasion of his retirement as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Project Renewal, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to serving the needs of homeless persons in New York City.

Edward Geffner began his work with Project Renewal in 1976. For the past third of a century, he has served the organization as its Executive Director, leading it with extraordinary compassion and commitment. Under his able management, Project Renewal has reached out to countless homeless men and women in need of support.

Under Mr. Geffner's leadership, Project Renewal has taken a comprehensive approach in providing critical assistance to its clients. The organization reaches out to homeless men and women on the streets of our nation's greatest city through mobile medical and psychiatric teams. Project Renewal helps provides essential services to those who are also coping with mental illness or drug addiction by linking residents to treatment programs that help them combat addiction or learn to manage their mental illness. Edward Geffner and the Project Renewal staff recognize that a good job is critical to independent living, and they have created a wide range of employment initiatives, including a culinary arts program that has successfully placed 85 percent of its graduates in jobs. I have seen the effectiveness of the programs that Project Renewal operates in the district that I represent.

Supported largely by private philanthropy and corporate sponsors, Edward Geffner and Project Renewal have worked in collaboration with numerous public, private, and not-for-profit organizations and social service providers to help homeless and formerly homeless individuals and families find employment and housing. Trained social workers and staff members, many of whom were formerly homeless,